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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT Cadre Department of the Ministry of Agriculture

REPORT

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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1. The Cadre Department of the Ministry of Agriculture was created after the Communist coup in February 1948 and took over some of the duties of the Presidium (of the Ministry) which had been abolished at the same time. This was the general policy throughout all the ministries in Czechoslovakia. The task of the Presidium had been to represent the Ministry on external matters, to approve the acts of various departments, to coordinate and organize the activities of the various components, and to handle personnel matters. The Cadre Department, however, was set up primarily for political reasons, to screen personnel and to watch them carefully, in both their official and private affairs. Therefore only those Communist Party members who were considered to be reliable were employed there. In addition to these activities, the Cadre Department handled personnel matters as they had been handled by the Presidium and took care that government regulations and principles dealing with wage policy were complied with in Czechoslovak agriculture. It also supervised the safety measures which were to be observed in agriculture and the regulations governing Workmen's Compensation insurance for seasonal employees. However, the Cadre Department did not represent the Ministry of Agriculture on external matters. The cabinet acted on matters with which the minister was concerned directly and each main administration acted as its own representative. The Cadre Department did not organize or coordinate the activities of the various components of the Ministry. In fact, there was no central office in the Ministry to coordinate and organize the activities of its various components. From time to time the cabinet tried to coordinate the activities. The lack of coordination was greatly felt. For instance, it often happened that three or even as many as six different commissions were sent from the Ministry for the same task, although one group could have handled the problem for all concerned.

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2. In mid-1953 steps were taken to set up a Coordination Department. However, these plans were discontinued in October 1953 when the order was given to incorporate the Administration of State Farms into the Ministry of Agriculture (some of the other ministries, for instance the Ministry of Finance, had an Organization Department which coordinated the activities of various components of the ministry).
3. The Cadre Department consisted of:
 - a. Personnel Branch. This branch handled personnel matters for the employees of the Ministry itself and for the employees of various components which were directly subordinate to the Ministry. These were: the Agricultural College in Prague and in Brno, Czechoslovak Academy of Agricultural Science, and the Scientific Veterinary Institute in Prague with a branch in Brno. The Personnel Branch hired and released employees and determined salaries. However, this branch acted only upon the authority of the Cadre Branch. There were eight employees in the Personnel Branch.
 - b. Labor and Wage Branch. This branch took care that government regulations and principles dealing with wage policy were complied with in Czechoslovak agriculture. (The Labor and Wage Branch was not at all concerned with these matters in regard to the employees of the Ministry, but only with regard to the employees in agriculture in general.) This branch was created during 1951 according to a general policy in conjunction with the liquidation of the Ministry of Social Security and took over the activities which were formerly performed by the Personnel Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the Personnel Branch had not gone into matters in this field so deeply, being more dependent on the Government Wage Commission than was the Labor and Wage Branch. In addition to these activities it helped the accounting services in the preparation of the justifications for salary allotments which had to be presented to the State Bank every three months. This branch had nine employees as well as one representative in the Main Administration of Tractor and Machinery Tools and still another in the Main Administration of Materials Supply.
 - c. Workmen's Disability Compensation Insurance and Safety Branch. This branch was set up during 1951 and was derived from the Labor and Wage Branch. It made surveys of the work safety measures in agriculture and investigated fatal accidents which occurred. (Of course, the police investigated for their own purposes, too.) In addition, this branch handled all the principal questions relating to agriculture brigades, including the disability compensation of the workers. For instance, this branch negotiated with the Ministry of Education in forming student brigades for seasonal work. There were five employees in this branch.
 - d. The Cadre Branch. This "branch" performed the bulk of the activities of the Cadre Department. Actually the Cadre Branch did not form an administrative unit as such, as did the other branches, but its activities were performed by individual cadre sections, each headed by a chief who was directly responsible to the chief of the Cadre Department.
4. There was a cadre section for screening the employees of the Ministry and a cadre section for each of the main administrations, which section performed the actual screening of the chief employees of those elements directly subordinate to the main administration

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and also supervised the screening of the subordinate employees of these components. Finally, there was a cadre section for the Department of Agricultural Construction. This Department was replaced by the Government Institute for Planning of Agricultural Constructions, AGROPROJEKT, by an act dated 1 April 1954.⁷ The activities of this section were identical with the activities of the above-mentioned cadre sections for the main administrations.

5. Each cadre section had several sub-sections, each of which dealt with the employees engaged in similar activities. Thus, for instance, there were two cadre sub-sections for the employees of the Accounting Services, and two sub-sections for the employees of the Finance Department. Out of these latter two, one sub-section was for the Internal Administration Branch, and the other one for the remaining branches; all within the cadre section for the employees of the Ministry. Another example: the cadre section for the Main Administration of Agricultural Schools had a sub-section for primary and secondary agricultural schools which screened the administrators and the chief accountants of the schools, while the teachers and other employees of the schools were screened by the regional national committee concerned. These schools were administered by the respective Regional National Committee and were not directly subordinate to the Main Administration for Agricultural Schools. However, this Main Administration worked out the plan of instruction for the primary and secondary agricultural schools, handled investments, and performed the political supervision of the schools. There was another sub-section for agricultural colleges which screened all the employees of the colleges because colleges were directly subordinate to the Main Administration. There was still another sub-section which performed the screening of the administrators of the various mass agricultural schooling programs. A total of 30 or 35 employees were employed with the cadre sections of the Ministry.
6. Only Communist Party members who came from the workers' class were employees of the cadre sections. These were former workers who, after 1948, were selected to be given political and professional training and then appointed to chief positions in the Ministry and as cadre officials. All of them were fanatic Party members who had superiority complexes and who made up for their lack of prudence by showing no mercy when dealing with personnel matters. From time to time the cadre officials were changed. They were assigned new positions within the cadre sections or they were appointed to other positions within the Ministry or its subordinate components, or even, in a few cases, returned to their original occupation.
7. The chief of the Cadre Department was subordinate to the Minister and was subordinate, politically, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party; most probably, to the Commission of Party Control. Since the end of 1952 and to a greater extent after the currency reform in June 1953, the cadre officials showed a more moderate attitude and also began to appreciate professional qualities and experience when screening. So, for instance, typists who applied for a position with the Ministry were not required to be Communist Party members or Czechoslovak Youth Union members. Similarly, a deputy chief of a branch of the Ministry retained his position because he was a specialist in spite of undergoing another screening initiated because his brother, a farmer, did not contribute the required quantity of products and did not want to join a uniform agricultural cooperative. Prior to the currency reform he would have been deprived of his position as deputy.

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8. The screening, as such, was primarily the problem of the régime and not of the administration itself. Its purpose was to eliminate all the open enemies of the régime, to watch those employees who were known as unreliable but who remained in their positions because of being specialists, to discover those employees who might have been considered as reliable by mistake, and finally, to discover those employees who had once been reliable and considered as such but who might have changed their attitude during the course of time. Further, the screening served to eliminate those employees who, although politically reliable, were not acceptable to the Ministry because of their personal behavior, either in the office or in private life. It is clear that the screening was very often misused. The screening was systematic and complete; that is, every employee was screened, including the cadre officials who were screened by the Party, and the screening was performed on a continuing basis.
9. The screening (so-called "cadreing" or "cadre proceedings") was performed in the following way. When someone applied for a position with the Ministry he first had to see the chief of the branch to which he was applying. If the chief considered him qualified for a position, he sent him to the respective cadre section. After a short discussion with the cadre official concerned, the applicant was either rejected or given a form to complete. This form was the so-called Cadre Inquiry Form and was issued by the Ministry itself. They were similar to those issued by every other Czechoslovak ministry. The number of questions differed slightly, according to the position to be filled. In addition to the usual questions about the applicant, it contained questions concerning relatives and even in-laws. The questions were quite complete, covering, for instance, one's political affiliation prior to 1945. The questions concerning the applicant himself were exhaustive. They covered all of his personal and professional background in detail and his political affiliations throughout his entire life, also in detail. Following are some examples of questions included:

Have you ever been abroad? When, where, and why? Reply in detail.

Do any of your friends, acquaintances or relatives live abroad? Where, why, and for how long?

Do you know anybody who left Czechoslovakia without official authorization?

Have you ever been investigated, arrested or sentenced? When, where, why, and by whom?

Have any of your relatives ever been sentenced? When, where, why, and by whom?

What was your occupation prior to 1945?

What were you doing during the Revolution in 1945?

What were you doing in February 1948?

Did you serve in the Czechoslovak Army abroad?

Did you take part in barricade fighting in 1945?

Have you ever been a political prisoner? Why and when?

What political books have you read recently?

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What is your hobby?

What political schooling have you received? Where and when?

Have you any personal property? If so, what?

Do you receive any income from rent or from insurance?

Give several references who are able to give information about your political and private life.

The applicant had to complete this form and hand it back to the cadre official along with a detailed autobiography.

10. After the cadre official received the completed form he sent inquiries to the references given, to prior and/or present employer, to the manager of the applicant's place of residence or to the ^{house} representative of the tenants (domovni duvernik), sometimes also to the local SNB or StB, and to any other persons designated by the Communist Party organization in the place of residence of the applicant. ¹. These inquiries asking for so-called "cadre judgment" (kadrový posudek) contained questions about private and political life of the applicant, how he behaved during World War II, during the Revolution in 1945, and in February 1948, and his attitude towards the People's Democracy.
11. After the official had received and studied all the replies, he sometimes sent additional questions to clarify particular points. After the written material had been gathered and looked through by the official, he either notified the applicant that he was no longer being considered, usually giving as a reason that the position was no longer available (never giving the true reason), or requested the applicant to appear for interview. This interview was the so-called "cadre discussion" (kadrový rozhovor). This was usually a brief interview regarding the questions answered on the forms. The cadre official never touched upon the professional qualifications of the applicant, this having been previously determined by the chief of the branch. The applicant called for "cadre discussion" was very seldom rejected but was usually sent to the Personnel Department which arranged his employment. (This method pertained only to general employees, since the chief employees came from the Communist cadres and were assigned by the Party.)
12. The cadre section screened each employee every year or every year and a half and always when the employee was to be promoted or when there were major changes in cadre officials. The cadre officials again sent forms to be completed to those who were originally contacted regarding the employee and also to those more recent acquaintances whom the cadre official considered to be knowledgeable on the more recent behavior and activities of the employee. The employee himself was sometimes given a form to complete, but this was not always the case. The purpose of completing almost identical forms again and again was to enable the cadre official to make comparisons between the answers given at various times in trying to find out whether there were discrepancies and, if so, to determine if there was a basis for a different conception of the employee's background or whether there had been a change in his attitude. When there were discrepancies in the answers, the employee was usually called for a "cadre discussion" where he was asked to clarify the situation. Steps were taken against him when he was unable to clarify the discrepancies.

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13. From time to time the cadre official requested, either in writing or verbally, the supervisor or colleagues of the employee or someone from his residence, to comment about the attitude of the employee. The employee was never informed by the cadre official that such inquiry was taking place.
14. Finally, the cadre official utilized the collected results of the various means of control to which the employee was subjected. These controls were not performed by the cadre itself, but were a part of the general control policy of the Communist Party, such as the watching of the employee at his work by Party member informants, watching the behavior of the employee in various mass organizations, etc.
15. The cadre sections kept a file on each employee which contained, in addition to the usual personal data, all the information collected about the employee, including accusations which were proved false and accusations which were not yet investigated for various reasons.

1. Comment: the house representatives were introduced throughout Czechoslovakia in 1952. There was one representative for each apartment house who was to represent the interests of the tenants at meetings of the so-called People's Administration, which was composed of representatives from particular small areas in the city, such as a block or a few streets. The People's Administration was headed by the People's Representative (lidovy duvernik). Source believes that the People's Administration areas corresponded to the National Security (Okrsek narodni bezpecnosti) areas which were also set up at the beginning of 1952. There was also an SNB member assigned to the National Security area who had his office in the area. The People's Representative kept office hours in the same office.

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